

The Rashomon Effect in Understanding History: Researching Multiple Views on “What is a Plantation?”



Project Title	The Rashomon Effect in Understanding History: Researching Multiple Views on “What is a Plantation?”
Project Summary	Research and write stories from multiple points of view, centered on the question, What is a Plantation? If you have ever wondered how history gets made, or how different perspectives and stories make it into our mainstream understandings of the past and others don’t, consider this challenge.
Country	United States
Agency	National Park Service
DoS Office	N/A
Post	N/A
Section	N/A
Number of Interns	2

Project Description

The Rashomon Effect refers to contradictory accounts by different people of the same event. Understanding the different people understand the same historical circumstance in entirely different ways can help us understand why it is difficult to agree about the meanings of history. Use your research skills to help the National Park Service tell stories from multiple points of view, centered on the question, What is a Plantation?

Desired Skills Interests

Additional Information

The intern(s) will use their historic research skills to define the specific steps of the project. Those steps will likely include the following. 1. Research into different kinds of plantations in the United States, through time. 2.

Identify documented plantations of a few different types, such as a lesser known northern plantation, a 17th-century tobacco plantation, a 19th-century southern cotton plantation, etc. and select a feasible number to delve into for this project. 3. Identify key roles in plantation life, both on the plantation and in the surrounding communities. Include not only geographic community but communities tied to the plantation economically. Such roles could include people on a plantation such as an enslaved field hand, indentured servant, overseer, enslaved captive working in main plantation house, and more. Outside, but key to the plantation could include a banker, shopkeeper, free African American living nearby, a business owner, and more. 4. Address the question in a narrative “What is a plantation from points of view of each of the persons identified as having key roles? The intern(s) will work with the supervisors and other National Park Service advisors along the way to produce a series of credible, documented descriptions of likely points of view. Some historically supported fiction such as creating composite characters will likely be needed to express the points of view. The point is not to make the disparate views coincide, but to understand the breadth of human experience in historic context.

Language Requirements

None